

What to Do for Colds and Flu



How long does a Cold or the Flu last?

Children and adults with viral infections recover when the illness has run its course. Colds caused by viruses may last for two weeks or longer.

How can I treat symptoms of Cold and Flu?

To treat symptoms, drink hot soothing beverages such as herbal tea or cider, eat hot soups such as chicken noodle or tomato, and use cough drops and lip balm.

Other measures that can help a person with a cold or flu feel better:

- ✓ Increase fluid intake
- ✓ Use a cool mist vaporizer or saline nasal spray to relieve congestion
- ✓ Soothe throat with ice chips, sore throat spray, or lozenges (for older children and adults)

How long should I stay home if I'm sick?

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®. You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

What should I do while I'm sick?

Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. If you must leave home, for example to get medical care, wear a facemask if you have one, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Wash your hands often to keep from spreading flu to others.

What can I do to protect myself and others from colds and flu?

- Get vaccinated.
- Avoid being around others who are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer.
- Protect infants by not exposing them to large crowds or sick family members when flu is in your community.
- Do not share drinking cups and straws.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door knobs, refrigerator handles, phones, water faucets).

Continued on back

What if I think my child has the flu?

- Stay home if you or your child is sick.
- Rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Children may need fever-reducing medications to keep their fever under control. Follow your child's doctor's instructions.
- Antibiotics will not help a person recover from the flu, because flu is caused by a virus, not by bacteria.

Take your child to the doctor or the emergency room if he or she:

- Breathes rapidly or with difficulty
- Has bluish skin color
- Does not drink enough and becomes dehydrated
- Does not wake up or interact with others
- Is so irritable that he or she doesn't want to be held
- Gets better only to become sick again, with fever and a more severe cough

If you are concerned that something does not seem right with your child, call your doctor or clinic.

What about antiviral medicines?

Your doctor or provider will order antiviral drugs for you if you are very sick with influenza and have a greater chance of getting serious complications from the flu, either because of your age or because you have a high-risk medical condition. **Most otherwise healthy people who get the flu do not need to be treated with antiviral drugs.** See this list for health and age factors that are known to increase a person's risk of getting serious complications from the flu and may receive an antiviral prescription.

Adults 65 years and older OR Children 2 years and younger

Asthmatics

Diabetes Mellitus

(and other Endocrine Disorders)

Pregnant

(or 2 Weeks from End of Pregnancy)

Kidney Disease

Liver Disease

Residents of Chronic-Care Facilities

Hospitalized

Chronic Lung Disease

(COPD or Cystic Fibrosis)

Heart Disease

(CHF or Coronary Artery Disease)

Morbidly Obese

(Body Mass Index greater than 40)

Children under 19 years of Age on Long-term

Aspirin Therapy

American Indians

Alaska Natives

Weakened Immune System

(from HIV, Cancer, Steroids)

Blood Disorders

(Sickle Cell Disease)

Neurologic and Neurodevelopment Conditions (including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy [seizure disorders], stroke, intellectual disability [mental retardation], moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury)